WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for processing customer demands, the method comprising:

receiving forecasted demands from at least one customer;

analyzing the forecasted demands to determine whether the forecasted demands are valid; and

sending the forecasted demands to at least one supplier when the forecasted demands are valid.

2. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the receiving the forecasted demands further includes extrapolating the forecasted demands based on expected demand by the customer.

3. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the extrapolating is based on historical data of the forecasted demands.

4. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the extrapolating is based on information supplied by the customer.

5. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising requiring the supplier to follow a production protocol in light of the sending.

6. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising requiring the supplier to follow an inventory protocol in light of the sending.

7. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising sending an exception notice to the customer when the demands are not valid.

8. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the customer demands are received by a supply chain server and wherein the analyzing includes checking at least

one of: the credit of the customer, whether the demand is a complete forecast, whether all information is complete and accurate, whether the customer has a contract with the supply chain server, and whether a part number associated with the demand is included in the contract between the supply chain server and the customer.

9. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forecasted demands relate to demands for a plurality of time periods from the at least one customer.

10. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

accumulating the forecasted demands thereby producing an accumulated forecast; and

sending the accumulated forecast to the at least one supplier when the demands are valid.

11. The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the forecasted demands come from a plurality of customers.

12. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forecasted demands are in a format determined by the customer.

13. The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising converting the forecasted demands into a different format.

14. The method as recited in claim 12, wherein the forecasted demands are received in one of an email, a spreadsheet, and an XML format.

15. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forecasted demands relate to products.

16. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forecasted demands relate to services.

17. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forecasted demands relate to bandwidth in a network.

18. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forecasted demands relate to airline tickets.

19. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising sending an abort code to the customer, the abort code enabling the customer to abort an order relating to one of the forecasted demands.

20. The method as recited in claim 19, further comprising canceling an order corresponding to one of the forecasted demands if the customer sends the abort code.

21. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising sending products corresponding to the forecasted demands from the supplier to the customer.

22. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising providing tracking information relating to the products, to at least one of the customer and the supplier.

23. The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the tracking information is provided by producing a web site accessible by at least one of the customer and the supplier.

24. The method as recited in claim 22, wherein the tracking information includes information relating to potential bottlenecks between the supplier and the customer.

25. The method as recited in claim 24, wherein the bottlenecks include customs.

26. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising

receiving a return request by the at least one customer for a particular product;

returning the particular product to a corresponding supplier; and

determining whether the customer desires a replacement product; wherein the receiving is performed by a supply chain server in a supply chain network.

27. The method as recited in claim 26, further comprising determining whether the replacement product is available from at least one of the suppliers in the supply chain network.

28. The method as recited in claim 27, further comprising adjusting the forecasted demands when the replacement product is not available from the suppliers in the supply chain network.

29. A method for processing customer demands for products in a supply chain network, the method comprising:

receiving forecasted demands from a plurality of customers;

accumulating the forecasted demands thereby producing an accumulated forecast;

sending the accumulated forecast to at least one supplier;

sending products corresponding to the accumulated forecast from the at least one supplier to a cross-dock point;

assembling the products at the cross-dock point based upon particular customers who produced the forecasted demands; and

sending corresponding products to the particular customers who produced the forecasted demands.

30. The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising providing tracking information relating to the products, to at least one of the customer and the supplier.

31. The method as claimed in claim 30, wherein the tracking information is provided by producing a web site accessible by at least one of the customer and the supplier.

32. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the tracking information includes movement of the products before the cross-dock point.

33. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the tracking information includes movement of the products after the cross-dock point.

34. The method as recited in claim 30, wherein the tracking information includes movement of the products through potential bottlenecks.

35. The method as recited in claim 34, wherein the potential bottlenecks includes customs.

36. The method as recited in claim 29, wherein the potential bottlenecks includes the cross-dock point.

37. The method as recited in claim 29, wherein the cross-dock point is specified by the particular customers.

38. The method as recited in claim 29, wherein the accumulating includes grouping together customer demands for products which are substantially interchangeable.

39. The method as recited in claim 29, wherein the sending products and the assembling the products results in the at least one supplier saving time in managing the forecasted demands.

40. The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising comparing the products at the cross-dock with the accumulated forecast.

41. The method as recited in claim 40, further comprising, if the comparing indicates that the products at the cross-dock and the accumulated forecast do not match, determining if the products at the cross-dock represent an over-shipment or an under-shipment.

42. The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising, when the products at the cross-dock represent an over-shipment, determining a disposition of products at the cross-dock in excess of the accumulated forecast.

43. The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising, when the products at the cross-dock represent an under-shipment, allocating available supply of the products among the particular customers who produced the accumulated forecast.

44. A method of providing a customer with a demanded product, the method comprising:

receiving a demand from the customer indicating the demanded product desired from a particular supplier;

determining whether the particular supplier can supply the demanded product; and

if the particular supplier cannot supply the demanded product, determining whether another supplier can supply the demanded product.

45. The method as recited in claim 44, further comprising sending the demanded product from the another supplier to the customer when the another supplier can supply the demanded product.

46. The method as recited in claim 44, wherein the demand is an ad hoc demand.

47. The method as recited in claim 44, further comprising converting the demand into one or more corresponding supplier part numbers.

48. The method as recited in claim 44, further comprising:

receiving demands from a plurality of customers in a supply chain network;

determining whether suppliers in the supply chain network can supply the demands of the plurality of customers; and

if the suppliers in the supply chain network cannot supply the demands of the plurality of customers, distributing products that are available from the suppliers among the plurality of customers.

49. The method as recited in claim 48, wherein the distributing is performed on a pro rata basis.

50. A method of financing a purchase of a product by at least one customer from at least one supplier, the method comprising:

sending the product to the customer from the supplier;

sending a financing payment for the product from a bank to a third party;

forwarding the financing payment from the third party to the supplier; and

sending a customer payment for the product from the customer to the bank.

51. The method as recited in claim 50, wherein:

the product comprises a plurality of products from a plurality of suppliers; and

the customer payment is a batch payment for the plurality of suppliers.

52. The method as recited in claim 50, wherein the step of sending the product comprises:

sending the product from the supplier to a cross-dock point; and

sending the product from the cross-dock point to the customer.

53. The method as recited in claim 50, further comprising providing a risk shifting service to at least one of the customer and the supplier.

54. The method as recited in claim 51, wherein the risk shifting service is one of a hedge, a call and a put relating to a price of the product.

55. The method as recited in claim 48, wherein the step of sending the product comprises:

transferring title of the product from the supplier to the third party; and

transferring the title of the product from the third party to the customer.

56. A method for processing customer demands received in a supply chain network, the method comprising:

receiving forecasted demands from a plurality of customers by a supply chain server;

aggregating the forecasted demands into an aggregated forecast; and

sending the aggregated forecast from the supply chain server to at least one supplier.

57. A method of providing a customer with a demanded product, the method comprising:

receiving a forecasted demand from at least one customer for delivery of a specified product at a first time, the first time requiring a supplier to supply the specified product by a second time;

receiving the product from the supplier before the second time without charging the supplier an extra fee for receiving the product before the second time; and

delivering the product to the customer at approximately the first time.

58. A method for processing customer demands for products in a supply chain network, the method comprising:

receiving the customer demands;

aggregating the customer demands to produce an aggregated demand;

sending the aggregated demand to at least one supplier;

sending products corresponding to the aggregated demand from the at least one supplier to a cross-dock point;

assembling the products at the cross-dock point based upon particular customers who produced the customer demands; and

sending corresponding products to the particular customers who produced the customer demands.

59. A method for insuring for supply/demand fluctuation for one or more products demanded by at least one customer from at least one supplier, the method comprising:

receiving at least one product from at least one supplier;

retaining the product until at least one of the customer experiences an unforeseen increase in demand for the product and the supplier experiences an unforeseen shortage in supply of the product; and

sending the product to a corresponding customer.

60. The method as recited in claim 59, wherein the product is a service.

61. The method as recited in claim 59, further comprising:

receiving forecasted demands from at least one customer regarding the at least one product.

62. The method as recited in claim 61, wherein the receiving forecasted demands includes extrapolating the forecasted demands based on expected demand by the customer.

63. The method as recited in claim 62, wherein the extrapolating is determined by actuarial calculations.

64. The method as recited in claim 59, wherein the products are replaced often enough so that the products remain fresh.

65. A method for processing a demand by a customer for a product in a supply chain network, the method comprising:

receiving the demand;

determining whether the demand can be fulfilled by supply of suppliers coupled to the supply chain network; and

when the demand cannot be fulfilled by the suppliers coupled to the supply chain network, contacting the customer and the suppliers to ascertain whether one of the demand and the supply can be altered.

66. The method as recited in claim 65, wherein the demand is received from plurality of customers; and

the contacting includes contacting the plurality of customers.

67. The method as recited in claim 65, wherein the demand comprises a forecast for products desired by the customer over a plurality of time periods.

68. The method as recited in claim 65, wherein the determining includes iterating through the time periods and determining available supply for each time period.

69. The method as recited in claim 67, wherein the time periods are weeks.

70. A system for processing customer demands, the system comprising:

a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer and at least one supplier, the supply chain server including a messaging services system and an ERP system; wherein:

the messaging services system receives forecasted demands from the at least one customer;

the ERP system analyzes the forecasted demands received by the messaging services system to determine whether the forecasted demands are valid; and

the messaging system sends the forecasted demands to the at least one supplier when the forecasted demands are valid.

71. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the ERP system further extrapolates the forecasted demands based on expected demand by the customer.

72. The system as recited in claim 71, wherein the ERP system extrapolates the forecasted demands based on historical data of the forecasted demands.

73. The system as recited in claim 71, wherein the ERP system extrapolates the forecasted demands based on information supplied by the customer.

74. The system as recited in claim 70, further comprising a contractual agreement requiring the supplier to follow a production protocol in light of the forecasted demands sent by the messaging services system.

75. The system as recited in claim 70, further comprising a contractual agreement requiring the supplier to follow a inventory protocol in light of the forecasted demands sent by the messaging services system.

76. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the messaging services system sends an exception notice to the customer when the ERP system determines that the demands are not valid.

77. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the ERP system analyzes the forecasted demands by checking at least one of: the credit of the customer, whether the demand is a complete forecast, whether all information is complete and accurate, whether the customer has a contract with the supply chain server, and whether a part number associated with the demand is included in the contract between the supply chain server and the customer.

78. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the forecasted demands relate to demands for a plurality of time periods from the at least one customer.

79. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein:

the ERP system further accumulates the forecasted demands thereby producing an accumulated forecast; and

the messaging services system sends the accumulated forecast to at least one of the suppliers when the demands are valid.

80. The system as recited in claim 79, wherein the accumulated forecasted demands come from a plurality of customers.

81. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the forecasted demands are in a format determined by the customer.

82. The system as recited in claim 81, wherein the messaging services system further converts the forecasted demands into a different format.

83. The system as recited in claim 81, wherein the forecasted demands are received in one of an EDI, an email, a spreadsheet, and an XML format.

84. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the forecasted demands relate to products.

85. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the forecasted demands relate to services.

86. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the forecasted demands relate to bandwidth in a network.

87. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the forecasted demands relate to airline tickets.

88. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein the messaging system further sends an abort code to the customer, the abort code enabling the customer to abort an order relating to one of the forecasted demands.

89. The system as recited in claim 88, wherein the ERP system further cancels an order corresponding to one of the forecasted demands upon receiving or abort code from the customer sends the abort code.

90. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein:

the supply chain server is further connected to at least one logistics provider; and

the ERP system further sends a command to the logistics provider so that the logistics provider transfers products corresponding to the forecasted demands from the supplier to the customer in response to orders from the supply chain server.

91. The system as recited in claim 90, wherein the supply chain server further comprises an extranet manager, the extranet manager providing tracking information relating to the products.

92. The system as claimed in claim 91, wherein the extranet manager provides the tracking information by producing a web site accessible by at least one of the customer and the supplier.

93. The system as recited in claim 91, wherein the tracking information includes information regarding the status of the product through potential bottlenecks between the supplier and the customer.

94. The system as recited in claim 93, wherein the bottlenecks include customs.

95. The system as recited in claim 70, wherein:

the supply chain server is further coupled to a logistics provider;

the messaging services system receives a return request by the at least one customer for a particular product;

the ERP system controls the logistics provider to return the particular product to a corresponding supplier; and

the ERP system determines whether the customer desires a replacement product.

96. The system as recited in claim 95, wherein the ERP system further determines whether the replacement product is available from suppliers in the system.

97. The system as recited in claim 96, wherein the ERP system further adjusts the forecasted demands when the replacement product is not available from suppliers in the system.

98. A system for processing customer demands for products, the system comprising:

a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer, at least one supplier, and a

logistics provider, the supply chain server including a messaging services system and an ERP system; wherein

the messaging services system receives forecasted demands from a plurality of customers;

the ERP system accumulates the forecasted demands thereby producing an accumulated forecast;

the messaging services system sends the accumulated forecast to at least one supplier;

the ERP system controls the logistics provider to transfer products corresponding to the accumulated forecast from the at least one assemble supplier to a cross-dock point;

the ERP system further controls the logistics provider to assemble the products at the cross-dock point based upon particular customers who produced the forecasted demands; and

the ERP system controls the logistics provider to send corresponding products to the particular customers who produced the forecasted demands.

99. The system as recited in claim 98, wherein the supply chain server further comprises an extranet manager which provides tracking information relating to the products.

100. The system as recited in claim 99, wherein the extranet manager provides the tracking information by producing a web site accessible to at least one of the customer and the supplier.

101. The system as recited in claim 100, wherein the tracking information includes movement of the products before the cross-dock point.

102. The system as recited in claim 100, wherein the tracking information includes movement of the products after the cross-dock point.

103. The system as recited in claim 100, wherein the tracking information includes movement of the products through potential bottlenecks.

104. The system as recited in claim 103, wherein the potential bottlenecks includes customs.

105. The system as recited in claim 104, wherein the potential bottlenecks includes the cross-dock point.

106. The system as recited in claim 105, wherein the cross-dock point is specified by the particular customers.

107. The system as recited in claim 98, wherein the ERP system accumulates the forecasted demands by grouping together customer demands for products which are substantially interchangeable.

108. The system as recited in claim 98, wherein the ERP system controlling the sending of the products and the assembling of the products results in the at least one supplier saving time in managing the forecasted demands.

109. The system as recited in claim 98, wherein the supply chain server further comprises a planner tool which compares the products at the cross-dock with the accumulated forecast.

110. The system as recited in claim 109, wherein, if the planner tool indicates that the products at the cross-dock and the accumulated forecast do not match, the planner tool determines if the products at the cross-dock represent an over-shipment or an under-shipment.

111. The system as recited in claim 110, wherein when the products at the cross-dock represent an over-shipment, the planner tool determines a disposition of products at the cross-dock in excess of the accumulated forecast.

112. The system as recited in claim 110, wherein when the products at the cross-dock represent an under-shipment, the planner tool allocates available supply of the products among the particular customers who produced the accumulated forecast.

113. A system for providing a customer with a demanded product, the system comprising:

a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer and at least one supplier, the

supply chain server including a messaging services system and an ERP system; wherein

the messaging system receives a demand from the customer indicating the demanded product desired from a particular supplier;

the ERP system determines whether the particular supplier can supply the demanded product; and

if the particular supplier cannot supply the demanded product, the ERP system determines whether another supplier can supply the demanded product.

114. The system as recited in claim 113, wherein:

the supply chain server is coupled to a logistics provider; and

the ERP system further controls the logistics provider to send the demanded product from the another supplier to the customer when the another supplier can supply the demanded product.

115. The system as recited in claim 113, wherein the demand is an ad hoc demand.

116. The system as recited in claim 113, wherein the ERP system further converts the demand into one or more corresponding supplier part numbers.

117. The system as recited in claim 113, wherein:

the messaging system receives demands from a plurality of customers;

the ERP system determines whether the suppliers can supply the demands of the plurality of customers; and

if the suppliers cannot supply the demands of the plurality of customers, the ERP system causes distribution of the products that are available from the suppliers among the plurality of customers.

118. The system as recited in claim 117, wherein the distributing is performed on a pro rata basis.

119. A system for financing a purchase of a product by at least one customer from at least one supplier, the system comprising:

a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer, at least one supplier, and a logistics provider, wherein the supply chain server controls the logistics provider to transfer the product from the supplier to the customer; and

a financial institution which sends a financing payment for the product to the supply chain server; wherein

the supply chain server forwards the financing payment to the supplier; and

the customer sends a customer payment for the product to the bank.

120. The system as recited in claim 119, wherein:

the product comprises a plurality of products from a plurality of suppliers; and

the customer payment is a batch payment for the plurality of suppliers.

121. The system as recited in claim 119, wherein the supply chain server controls the logistics provider to:

send the product from the supplier to a cross-dock point; and

send the product from the cross-dock point to the customer.

122. The system as recited in claim 119, wherein the supply chain server further provides a risk shifting service to at least one of the customer and the supplier.

123. The system as recited in claim 122, wherein the risk shifting service is one of a hedge, a call and a put relating to a price of the product.

124. The system as recited in claim 119, wherein the ERP system controls the logistics provider to transfer the product by performing:

transferring title of the product from the supplier to the supply chain server; and

transferring the title of the product from the supply chain server to the

customer.

125. A system for processing customer demands received in a supply chain network, the supply chain network including a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer and at least one supplier, the supply chain server including a messaging services system and an ERP system; wherein:

the messaging system receives forecasted demands from a plurality of the customers;

the ERP system aggregates the forecasted demands into an aggregated forecast; and

the messaging system sends the aggregated forecast to at least one supplier.

126. A system for providing a customer with a demanded product, the system comprising a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer, at least one supplier, and at least one logistics provider, the supply chain server including a messaging services system and an ERP system, wherein

the messaging system receives a forecasted demand from the at least one customer for delivery of a specified product at a first time, the first time requiring a supplier to supply the specified product by a second time;

the ERP system controlling the logistics provider to receive the product from the supplier before the second time without charging the supplier an extra fee for receiving the product before the second time; and

the ERP system further controls the logistics provider to deliver the product to the customer at approximately the first time.

127. A system for processing customer demands for at least one product, the system comprising:

a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer, at least one supplier, and a logistics provider, the supply chain server including a messaging services system

and an ERP system; wherein

the messaging services system receives the customer demands;

the ERP system aggregates the customer demands thereby producing an aggregated demand;

the messaging services system sends the aggregated demand to at least one supplier;

the ERP system controls the logistics provider to transfer products corresponding to the aggregated demand from the at least one supplier to a cross-dock point;

the ERP system further controls the logistics provider to assemble the products at the cross-dock point based upon particular customers who produced the customer demands; and

the ERP system controls the logistics provider to send corresponding products to the particular customers who produced the customer demands.

128. A system for processing a demand by a customer for a product, the system comprising:

a supply chain server coupled to at least one customer and at least one supplier, the supply chain server including a messaging services system, an ERP system, and a planner support tool, wherein:

the messaging system receives the demand;

the ERP system determines whether the demand can be fulfilled by supply of suppliers coupled to the supply chain network; and

when the demand cannot be fulfilled by the suppliers coupled to the supply chain network, the planner support tool contacts the customer and the suppliers to ascertain whether one of the demand and the supply can be altered.

129. The system as recited in claim 128, wherein the demand is received from plurality of customers; and

the planner support tool contacts the plurality of customers.

130. The system as recited in claim 128, wherein the demand comprises a forecast for products desired by the customer over a plurality of time periods.

131. The system as recited in claim 128, wherein the planner support tool iterates through the time periods and determines available supply for each time period.

132. The system as recited in claim 130, wherein the time periods are weeks.